



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

MAKING A HIGH SCHOOL A CENTER OF SOCIAL LIFE

LOUISE R. GIBBS

High School, Prescott, Arizona

The boys and girls who come to high school are just about the age when they begin to realize that there is such a thing as a social world and that there is a place in it for them. I hold it to be within the field of school work to help them find that place and to fill it to the best of their ability. Association with people is counted as one of the most valuable gains in any educational world; in college, I think we shall all agree that the people we met, the different types of minds and characters we were thrown with, the men and women with whom we came in contact, sometimes forcibly, and not always enjoyably, gave us a broader and more valuable education than that we gained from books. In the same way, although in a less degree, is this true of high-school life, and the student should have the opportunity of meeting socially those whom he sees every day in his classrooms. The boy or girl who simply comes to school and studies, and goes home, misses much that he or she needs.

Another reason for emphasizing the social side of school life is the happiness it brings, and it surely is within our mission as teachers to do all in our power to make our boys and girls happy. There is nothing which brings more joy if you love the children, as I believe every real teacher must, than to see a group of schoolboys and schoolgirls having a genuinely good time. They ought to be happy and have all the good times it is within our power to give them. Give them some good times right in the place where they work, and the memory of the pleasures will put a certain glamor over the prosiest of school-rooms. The only room in my own high school that I remember loving was the twelfth grade, for it was not until the fourth year, as we met to prepare for graduation, that our class came together in any social way.

The attitude of the children toward each other I find much benefited by more social life in the school. Generally boys and girls form their own friendships without any assistance from parents or teachers, but quite often we find a shy one who is left out and who needs many opportunities before he or she can make friends, and we all need friends at any age. Strange prejudices arise when people have simply a sight acquaintance which is overcome when they learn to know each other.

The attitude of the boys toward the girls and the girls toward the boys, that very difficult and delicate thing to handle during the high-school period, is, I firmly believe, made more rational and sensible by a good deal of social contact. The boys ought to have girl friends; they need each other then as in after life, and the only problem is to keep these friendships reasonable and wholesome, and as free from sentimentality as possible. I am well aware that this position of mine has been attacked on the ground that the high-school gatherings engender foolish love affairs between the boys and girls, but it has been my experience that the young people who know each other well, who are together on the athletic grounds, and the evening social gatherings, are much less apt to be silly about their friendships than those who are not. Do what we may, we cannot head off these youthful love affairs, and I am not at all sure I would if I could. Of course once in a while some pretty little girl loses her head over too much attention and has to be reasoned with firmly, or some dreamy lad forgets to get his geometry lesson while he fills the fly leaf of his book with the name of his lady love. But if you know what is the matter with these particular lads and lassies, it is much easier to deal with them and to give a timely word of warning. I should feel I was not well prepared for the best school work if I did not know who liked whom best among the boys and girls.

One of the best results I have noted from the social life in the school is the spirit of democracy which is bound to be fostered, provided the social life is general for the whole school. The greatest mistake which could be made, I believe, is to let the natural leaders monopolize the social functions and allow the

backward ones to be left out. But if various kinds of social events are planned and the affairs are managed so that none are omitted, then all have an equal opportunity, and the result is necessarily democratic. Suppose the mayor's daughter does dance with the wash woman's son! It is a good thing for both of them, provided she is a nice girl and he is a nice boy. Force of circumstances will separate them soon enough into different social strata. Let the public school use its leveling influence between the rich and poor as long as possible. I want every member of our high school to feel that he or she has a place which is just as good as any other place in the high-school world, and that if any distinctions are made they are based on merit and ability. I believe this spirit of social democracy is a very, very important thing to foster in our country in this day and age when everything is tending toward class distinction; and I see no institution which can foster such a spirit, except the church and the school.

In mentioning the aids to school life from the introduction of the social side, let me not forget the totally different attitude it occasions between teachers and pupils. The teacher and pupil who have only a classroom acquaintance know each other very superficially, for neither one is, or can be, quite natural under those conditions. They are unavoidably on different planes, and if a pupil sees you only under such circumstances he is apt to gain a totally wrong impression of you and of your attitude toward him. But if you meet the boy in a game of tennis, or play with the girl on the basket-ball court, if you dance with them in the evening, and have a good visit about something which has nothing to do with history, mathematics, or Latin, the boy or the girl learns to know you, to understand that you are human, and that you think and feel as they do about many things. Under such circumstances it is easy to build up a good comradeship which makes them listen more attentively to what you say in school, and brings about an affection which has far more influence than the scoldings or dignified dissertations one may deliver from his little pedestal as teacher.

In the practical working-out of the social idea in Prescott,

we have resorted to all the familiar methods and to a few that are perhaps not familiar. Athletics are a tremendous help; the football and the trackwork keeping the boys together in interested groups, while the tennis clubs supply the same thing for the smaller and younger boys and girls. The basket-ball teams are about as strong a feature as we have for the girls alone, although the girls' glee club of last year was another good plan to get the girls together. Little incidental things help. One of my girls this year has come into school from a ranch some distance away, and she has no piano where she is staying in town. She spoke one day of how much she missed her music, and I asked her to use the high-school piano when she wanted to. Often now she stays after school and plays, and I have noticed a number of girls staying with her and gathering around the piano to listen or sing. It gave me the idea that we might work up very informal little musicales after school.

But these plans are all for groups, and I believe it is a wonderful help to have the high school all together socially. Friday afternoon we have allowed the pupils who cared to—and that meant the large majority—to stay for an hour or so to dance and talk. Generally all the teachers stayed, and always some of them. This was the best method of all, I believe, to get the pupils acquainted and bring out the more reticent ones. Once in about six weeks we plan for an evening dancing party in the school auditorium, to which are invited all the members of the high school and their friends, and we urge particularly the attendance of the parents. The children certainly enjoy these gatherings, and I have found them to be innocent, happy good times for all of us. By means of the dances many little social customs may incidentally be taught which all young people should know, and these evenings are apt to bring out ease of manner and self-assurance just at the most gawky and awkward age. Only the person who has grown up without self-poise knows how much it means to attain it early in life.